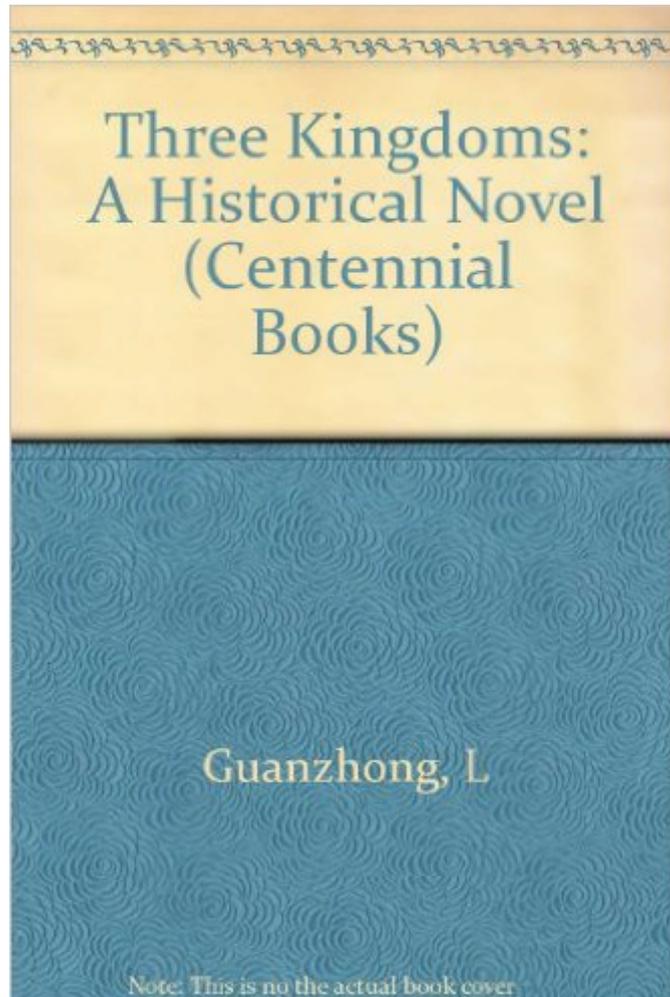


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# Three Kingdoms: A Historical Novel (Centennial Books)



## Synopsis

This 14th-century novel portrays a fateful moment at the end of the Han dynasty (206 BC - AD 220) when the future of the Chinese empire lay in the balance. Fearing attacks by three rebellious states, the emperor sent out an urgent appeal for support.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (204 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

"Romance of the Three Kingdoms" is possibly the most famous and important novel in classic Chinese literature. Not only is it the earliest of the "Four Great Books" (as evidenced by its more archaic language), but it created a complete cultural phenomenon whose impact is still fresh today -- just ask all the young people today who, without having read a word of the book, still know the characters from the strategy and fighting video games released by the company Koei. And how many literary works can claim to have had a direct impact on history as this book, which was used as a strategy text by the great Manchurian leader Nurhachi and his son Hongtaiji? I'd read the original archaic text when I was about eight years old, so obviously my views will be heavily slanted by my familiarity with this text. On approaching this translation, what I find is a well done, respectful and informative translation that doesn't quite nail the tone of the original text, but will be a good read for modern readers who don't read Chinese. And to be honest, Chinese is extremely hard to translate into English. Just the fact that subjects, articles and pronouns are often omitted from a sentence is enough to cause nightmares for a Chinese-English translator. And even by Chinese

standards, *The Three Kingdoms* is a work whose linguistic economy is staggering. In one page, this book can convey the deaths of half a dozen characters, three to four battles, multiple schemes, and include four or five "tribute" poems, to boot. Such is the style of this work, and it could not have been easy for translator Moss Roberts to adapt this style into English.

I first became intrigued with the Three Kingdoms's historical events when I played the game *Dynasty Warriors 2* for PS2. Afterwards I was desperately searching to find the best novel translation and finally bought the 4-volume box set translated by Moss Roberts which is the UNABRIDGED version (make sure to get this edition as it tells the whole story w/o leaving anything out). I then set out to explore the 2200+ pages of Chinese history and I must say, it was a fascinating experience. I initially grasped what was going to happen in time but there was so much other details to the story and idealisms portrayed. Leadership, loyalty, heroism, military tactics and warfare, treason, and even romance play such a significant role in this epic novel. "The empire long united, must divide" and "the empire long divided, must unite" pretty much opens and closes the novel perfectly. Heroes such as Guan Yu, Zhang Fei, Zhao Yun, and Huang Gai portray such loyalty that it would be kind of hard to imagine in today's society. From the other reviews I've read, most people think Liu Bei (Xuande) is the protagonist of the novel and this seems very true since Roberts lauds Bei's characteristics and portrays Cao Cao of the evil and cunning type. Personally, I think anyone can choose their personal protagonist and for me that would be Zhao Yun because of his undisputed bravery and loyalty. Another character that I admired was probably Zhuge Liang for his awe-aspiring military tactics. Zhuge was the best strategist of his time and he wrote several books on warfare but unfortunately, most were destroyed but you can still buy one of his famous books, "The Art of War." Warning, spoiler ahead: This book has its sad moments particularly when someone important or someone who contributed a lot to his lord dies.

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